

#233 EVERETT HYLAND
USS *PENNSYLVANIA*, SURVIVOR

INTERVIEWED ON
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TRANSCRIBED BY:
CARA KIMURA
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(Background conversation.)

Bob Chenoweth (BC): The following oral history interview was conducted by Bob Chenoweth for the national park service, USS *ARIZONA* Memorial at the Sheraton Waikiki on December 4, 1996 at nine a.m. The person being interviewed is Everett Hyland, who was on board the USS *PENNSYLVANIA*, BB-38, on December 7, 1941. For the record, would you please state your full name, place of birth, and date?

Everett Hyland (EH): Everett Hyland. I was born in Stamford, Connecticut, March 17, 1923.

BC: Could you also tell me what you considered your hometown in 1941?

EH: Nineteen forty-one? Stamford, Connecticut.

BC: Okay. Could you tell me a little bit about on December 7, where you were stationed, what was your duty station?

EH: On the seventh, it was a Sunday. I was in my quarters and I found out fifty years later that I was getting ready to go a church service. Somewhere along the line I forgot that.

BC: And you were stationed on board the *PENNSYLVANIA*, what was your rank at the time?

EH: I didn't have a rank, I had a rating. I was a Seaman Second Class.

BC: And what were your actual duties on board the *PENNSYLVANIA*?

EH: I was a radio striker, which is a radio apprentice. I had been to communications school in the Navy and I was on board the *PENNSYLVANIA* as a radio striker, with the CR division, which is communications radio.

BC: Where on board the ship was your duty station? I mean where was the radio . . .

EH: The radio shack.

BC: The radio shack. Where was that?

EH: Several decks down.

BC: Forward, aft?

EH: Forward on the ship.

BC: Forward on the ship, below the superstructure?

EH: Oh yes.

BC: And the ship was in dry dock at the time . . .

EH: That's correct.

BC: . . . of the attack.

EH: [Yes], at the time of the attack, I was in my quarters. I wasn't at a duty station.

BC: I see. What happened? What . . .

EH: Well, they sounded general quarters, so up topside I went. I was with the antenna repair squad, which -- oh, there were probably [eight] of us in that group. The duty of the antenna repair squad was if the antennas get shot down, you climb up and put them back. Real intelligent position. So we went topside.

The first duty I had after I got topside -- did you want me go into that?

BC: Sure, sure.

EH: Was to go down the [*starboard*] side -- the duty station for battle station, which is where we ended up, was on the aft part of the ship on the starboard side and my first duty was to close all the battle ports. And so I went the length of the main deck battening down the battle ports, and then back to the aft part of the ship. There was no need for radio communication. It was obvious to all the ships in the harbor that we were under attack. So they had us carrying ammunition out to the three-inch fifty on the fantail.

BC: So the three-inch fifty, what was that?

EH: Anti-aircraft gun.

BC: An anti-aircraft gun. That was a three-inch gun, a three-inch rifle.

EH: A three-inch diameter, correct.

BC: And that was on the stern of the ship?

EH: On the fantail, yes. Starboard side, on the fantail.

BC: I'd like to ask you a little bit about the radio equipment. You said that you worked on the antennas and that was your battle station, in case the antennas were damaged. Describe the antennas. What were they --- describe, first of all, describe the radio equipment, if you would. What type of equipment was used?

EH: I have no idea what we had then, Bob. I --- it's . . .

BC: I mean, I think people now think in terms of radio communications as being very sophisticated, but at the time, it was relatively . . .

EH: Oh [yes], it was all dot, dash. Yes.

BC: So the antennas were intended for receiving and sending signals?

EH: Correct. [Yes].

BC: Okay. And these were like long, were they like long lines?

EH: Yes, they were just like wires stretched from one mast to another. Yes.

BC: When the attack started and you came up on deck, what did you see?

EH: Well, I'm very careful about telling people what I saw because in this organization, Pearl Harbor Survivors, I have heard people tell about their guns firing a hundred miles and we had the biggest thing in the Navy, and we could probably fire twenty miles. We had one of the members of our own chapter who claims his ships shot down fifty-nine airplanes of the twenty-nine they lost. So I'm very careful about what I saw -- for the most part, I really don't remember what I saw.

A few things I did --- I remember, as I was running down -- running, walking down the main deck, battening down the battle ports and I would stick my head out the port, just to see what was going on. And one of the things I remember, is some Marine guard still out there on guard duty walking on the dock. And every time a plane would come in strafing, he'd kind of duck down and I figured, he's in the wrong spot.

BC: But he was still at his post.

EH: He was still at his post. Yes. And another --- for years, I thought I remembered something and I asked one of the fellows at the memorial about it and he could find nothing written about it at all. I figured, well, I'm dreaming. And you know, the other day, I took the ride out with the boat crew out to the memorial and back. And I'm listening to the tape and one of the people talking on the tape saw the same thing that I thought I remembered that they had no record of.

BC: What was that?

EH: That was -- they evidently had fired a line from one ship to another and the men were trying to get off the ship by going hand over hand, and I could remember them, some of them, getting part way and the flames, the heat from the flames and then dropping right down into it.

BC: Now, this was from the *PENNSYLVANIA*?

EH: No, no, no. No, no, no. I was looking across the harbor at one of the other -- I don't even know what ship I was looking at.

BC: Well, there is this story of people leaving the *ARIZONA*, one of the gun directors, and going hand over hand on the rope over to the *VESTAL*.

EH: I have no idea what ship this fellow was even talking about. I asked one of the sailors on the boat to listen to it the following trip, but I never heard them.

BC: Aside from battening down the hatches, what else did you do?

EH: Well, they had us carrying the ammo out to the three-inch fifty and this is what we were doing during the first part of the attack. During the lull between the two waves, we just stood around and we started doing the same thing during the second attack and I

had just been handed a three-inch shell and I was getting ready to run it around the gun again and the next thing I knew, I was flat on my face.

BC: Geez. What happened?

EH: Well, the bomb went off and I had my right ankle shot open. I had a chip of bone out of my -- want to hear about those?

BC: Sure.

EH: Chip of bone out of the right shin. Something went through my right thigh and out my rear end. And I had a six-by-eight inch piece blown out of the left thigh. I had five pieces of shrapnel in the left leg. My right hand was shot open. I lost part of the left elbow. I lost part of the muscle out of the bicep.

BC: But now, obviously, you didn't -- when you went down, you didn't realize that you had all these injuries?

EH: No, no, no. The first thing I knew, I was on my -- my arms were in front of me and I saw all the skin peeled off. And then I -- I never even heard it. I just realized we had been hit and I picked myself up and was wondering where everyone went and the next thing I knew, I heard some officer hollering, "Get that man down to sick bay!"

BC: So then they took you down to the sick bay?

EH: [Yes], someone led me down to sick bay and evidently the sick bay, combat sick bay was our regular radio men's quarters, because several of the fellows in there were fellows from my own division and that was their battle station, to take care of cases that were wounded. And they finally put me -- I was sitting on the deck for a while -- and they finally put me into a bunk and I was there, lying there, and I saw one of the third class radio men go by and I said, "Hey, [Osy]."

And he looked at me, and he says, "Who are you?"

And then I realized that either something's wrong with me or something's wrong with him. So I said, "It's Hyland."

And all he did was go, "Oh, oh," and walk away from me.

BC: Wow.

EH: Good for the morale.

BC: Yeah, I was going to ask you how did that make you feel?

EH: Several years later, when I attempted to get some compensation for the wounds, I found out that the Navy had these listed as superficial wounds. It seems that their big problem was trying to keep my alive because of the burns, when the bomb went off. The bomb, the blast just took all the skin off our legs, arms, face, 'cause we had shorts and t-shirts on. That was our combat uniform.

My brother was a sergeant with the Marine detachment on the *INDIANAPOLIS* and they were out on patrol. He saw me about a year later and he said that when he came in, I guess it was Wednesday after the attack, he came over the *PENNSY* [*USS PENNSYLVANIA*] looking for me, and they had me on the missing list. So at that time, we had this large naval hospital in the [*Pearl Harbor*] Navy Yard. He went over there looking for me. And he said he finally found a group of us all lined up and they had tagged my toe already. That's how he identified me. But he said even he didn't know me. He said we looked like roast turkeys lined up. But I didn't even know he was there.

BC: So when you -- how long did you stay in the hospital and what happened after you left this hospital?

EH: Oh, I was in the hospital nine months and then I got put back at sea duty. I was on the *USS MEMPHIS*, which is a light cruiser. Experienced help.

BC: Experienced help. Do you know what time it was that the ship was hit?

EH: Somewhere around ten minutes after nine, according to the ship's log that I got from Daniel Martinez [*Historian, USS Arizona Memorial/NPS*].

BC: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about, as far as that day?

EH: That's all I remember from that day, Bob.

BC: Okay. I'd like to just talk to you a little bit about what you think of all this now and you'd mentioned to me that you taught science too.

- EH: Oh, I taught science to elementary children for twenty-nine years.
- BC: And you can just answer these anyway you want, but I'm curious as to -- obviously, you're a member of this organization that meets on a regular basis, discusses these events. Why, to you, why is all this important? Why is the Pearl Harbor story important?
- EH: The Pearl Harbor story is important to me because people should be made aware of these things, that they really did happen. And hopefully, they won't happen again, but of course, that's dreaming, because it happens in the world every day, somewhere. But it's a shame. It shouldn't, but people are people, or politicians are politicians.
- BC: Specifically, in relation to Pearl Harbor, do you think, looking back on events now -- this twenty-twenty hindsight that everybody talks about -- do you think, or what do you think could have been done to prevent this from happening? Do you have any ideas about that?
- EH: (Chuckles) Not really, Bob. What could have prevented it, I have no idea. It's -- why do people have wars?
- BC: Well, at the time, I mean, was it, for you, was it a possibility that Japan and the United States would go to war.
- EH: When we used to go out on patrol and they would have general quarters, the saying used to be, you know, "The Japanese are attacking. The Japs are attacking us."
- We'd run to our battle station. And most of us knew that eventually we were going to have to fight the Japanese. Now, where that trickled down from, I have no idea. I suppose from the politicians, the officers, the officers to us. But we expected to fight them eventually. We just didn't know when.
- BC: Did you have any idea why?
- EH: At the time, probably not, no.
- BC: Well, why do you think now, looking back on -- why do you think we fought Japan? Why do you think Japan attacked Hawaii?

EH: Because we had them in a corner. Roosevelt had shut off their oil. They needed oil; they had to get into the Southeast Asia for their oil, which was the only place they could get it at the time. As the story goes, the first thing they had to do in order to conquest Southeast Asia was to take out our fleet, or the main ships of the fleet, and they did that quite well.

BC: I'd asked you earlier about why it was important, but I'd like to just ask you again, for you, what's the lesson of Pearl Harbor?

EH: Stay out of the Navy (chuckles). You know, you mean, the attack and the whole ball of wax?

BC: Yeah. The big picture.

EH: The big picture is why don't we get along with people? You know, one of the things I try to instill in students -- and I had little kids -- but there are other ways of solving problems besides killing someone. Whether it's a nation or whether it's on a street corner. It's not the way to solve problems.

BC: But it does seem to be the method that we often resort to, and often very quickly.

EH: This is -- it's a shame that it happens, but it does.

BC: What about the Japanese? What's your opinion about the Japanese?

EH: (Laughs) We get asked that quite often at the memorial, Bob. You know, "What do you think of the Japanese?"

My wife works the same days I do, and I usually point her out and say, "Go over and ask her," you know.

My wife is from Maebashi-shi in Gunma-ken, Japan. I met her when I was here for the fiftieth reunion in '91.

BC: Oh, really?

EH: Yes.

BC: Interesting.

EH: (Chuckles) We both had been married years before and divorced and so when I met her at the -- in fact, she worked right

here at the hotel. But I used to talk to her every morning when I went down through the lobby. She worked for a Japanese tour company. And my buddy took some pictures of the two of us and I told her if she gave me her name and address, I would send her some copies of the photo. And that's where she made her mistake. So we corresponded a few times and then I took some trips over to visit with her and her son seemed to like me and I got along well with me. So finally, my daughter said to me -- I was living with my daughter in San Diego -- she says, "Dad, don't let this one get away," so.

BC: Uh-huh.

EH: So I threw my toothbrush in a suitcase and over I came.

BC: All right. Well, that's interesting.

EH: [Yes], we were married, oh, a little over two years ago over at the Shingon Mission, over in Haleiwa. You know, the Buddhist bishop who married us, when we were sitting, having tea with him after the ceremony, he was also from Japan. He says, "Well, something good did come of the war."

BC: Yeah, sounds like it. It looks like it. Yes.

EH: Well, I get well taken care of.

BC: That's great. Let me back up a minute.

EH: Yes sir.

BC: I wanted to ask you also a little bit about how long were you on the *PENNSYLVANIA*, for . . .

EH: I was on the PENNSY [*USS Pennsylvania*] about six months. I had gone through boot camp, then we went to communications school and I got on the *PENNSY* when the fleet was all in at San Pedro. They sent me up from San Diego, I went up to San Pedro on the *USS CRANE*, which was a four-stacker, tin can, destroyer. And onto the *PENNSYLVANIA* from that. And then I came over to Hawaii with the fleet, and that was from August of '41.

BC: Now, when you went through the communications training, was it just strictly radio . . .

EH: Just radio, yes. Radio, they gave you some theory, because in those days, you know, you were supposed to be your own repair man too. And there was no such thing as a -- today, they have radio techs, radio operators. It was all one rating then. You were a radioman, you . . .

BC: Did you repair the sets?

EH: You were supposed to repair your own gear, yes.

BC: Adjusting, tuning, all sorts of things.

EH: Right.

BC: So you didn't learn any of the signals side of communications?

EH: I don't . . .

BC: Just operating the . . .

EH: All we did was operate the key.

BC: I see.

EH: [Yes], the old di-di-dah.

BC: So you did learn Morse code . . .

EH: [Yes], that's what the schooling was for, primarily. The theory -- a little bit of theory and you were supposed to pick up the rest once you got with your unit or if you were lucky enough to get with a radio gang, as I was. Because even though you went through communications school, it was no guarantee that you were going to wind up working in radio. You could be scrubbing decks for the next four years.

BC: What about life here? I mean, obviously you hadn't been out here too long, but . . .

EH: I been here three and a half years.

BC: No, I mean in 1941.

EH: Oh, in 1941.

BC: Did you have a chance to see much of Hawaii?

EH: Yes, we'd get into Honolulu on liberty or get over to Waikiki. The usual sailor things. Of course, the only place in Honolulu then was just about where Chinatown is now. That was -- the whole city was right there. You could stand in Waikiki and from the beach, you could see the mountains, and now you see nothing but high rise.

BC: What was the atmosphere like? I mean, were people talking about the possibility of war or . . .

EH: The public? I really don't know because, you had very little to do with the public.

BC: How about among people you were with, people in the fleet?

EH: Oh yes. Sailors would talk about, you know, eventually we're going to go to war, but of course, I guess, that's the business of military. And of course, at that time too, Europe was already at war, so you know, you could see the handwriting on the wall, I suppose.

BC: And had they actually transferred some ships from the Atlantic? Weren't there ships out . . .

EH: [Yes], several of the ships that were in the fleet here had come from the Atlantic [*Fleet*]. *PENNSYLVANIA* was part of the Pacific Fleet, originally, though. *PENNSYLVANIA* was flagship of the Pacific Fleet and we were also, I believe, at that time, flagship of the Navy. It was Admiral [*Husband E.*] Kimmel's ship, he just didn't happen to be on it that day.

BC: Anything else?

EH: Never buy anything with a handle on it. (Chuckles)

BC: Dan had reminded me of -- we talked a little bit about your volunteering at the memorial, but what's that like? What's that like, going out and talking to people who, in most cases, weren't even alive when these events took place?

EH: Some of them have intelligent questions, but we do get asked some strange things, "Are you a veteran?"

Once they find out that we were here at Pearl Harbor, then they, "Are you a veteran? Were you in the service?"

Even after you tell them you were on a battleship -- most of them don't even know what a battleship was.

BC: Well, it's not . . .

EH: It's an interesting place too. But I thoroughly enjoy it. I enjoy talking with the public. I enjoy giving the talks before the film.

BC: In terms of the visitors, do you find that foreign visitors know more or less about . . .

EH: Depends on which country they're from. Europeans seem to know a great deal more. Evidently, they're interested in these things and they have some very good questions to ask you about what went on, about what you were doing. They seem to be more aware of what went on at Pearl Harbor than many other people, than many Americans.

The Japanese people ask, what do we think about them coming here, to the memorial. And many of them know how the war ended, but they don't know how it started, so we're very happy to see them there, so they can find out how it began.

BC: Can you talk about -- do you have any anecdotal things that you remember about visiting with Japanese people? Just like what you're saying, people know in Japan how the war ended, they know about the atomic bombing, but they don't know much about their own earlier . . .

EH: About, you know, some of the things that they did.

BC: What do they think about that, when you talk about that?

EH: Well, you don't talk with most of them because they don't speak English. The few you do get who speak English seem to know what's going on. Very few Japanese know what their army did, you know, from the thirties on. My wife is one of the ones who is quite knowledgeable in that area. Her father was taken away from his wife and children and put into the army, into China. And when he came home, he was one of the few, I guess, who talked about what he had to do. And he wasn't too proud of it.

BC: That's interesting. Do you ever share that perspective with people, the experience that your wife's father . . .

EH: Yes, people have asked me about, you know when you go to Japan, visit the family, what are they like? And you know, do they -- as I tell them, if they owned a carpet, they'd have it out for me. And not just a red carpet. I get treated very well.

(Background conversation)

BC: Danny wanted me to ask you about the fact that this is the last get together of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association here in Hawaii. I don't know if you guys have plans to continue meeting on a regular basis on the mainland, but I understand that this is the last formal . . .

EH: Oh, there's some talk about this being the last one. And as I tell people, the problem with being in this organization is I'm with a bunch of old men. (Chuckles)

Well, we do have Sons and Daughters of Pearl Harbor too. In fact, my daughter is a member of Pearl Harbor Survivors, the Sons and Daughters of Pearl. And my granddaughter, who is an ensign in the Navy, is also a member of Pearl Harbor, Sons and Daughters of Pearl Harbor Survivors.

BC: How do you think the organization will change over time, and will it continue in the same way as the Survivors association has, when there are no survivors around?

EH: You mean when it's taken over by the Sons and Daughters?

BC: Yeah.

EH: I have no idea. I have often wondered, what they will do to keep it alive, but the ideas behind their organization are great. And hopefully, it will turn out that way, you know, to keep this bit, this memory alive of the fact that this took place.

BC: I'd like to just try one more time again to ask you . . .

(Background conversation)

BC: Oh, change tapes.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BC: . . . sort of timeless question about what does it mean? What does it all mean? And we were talking when they were changing the tapes about just the, again, the experiences, but also the big picture. The unfinished business of the war, but also the attitudes that are prevalent in the organization.

EH: Oh, most people in the organization are very friendly toward the Japanese. After all, they do come over and visit with us every year. The pilots have been coming over for years. And I guess it was two years ago when they had over 400 of their members here, Japanese, from the Japanese survivors. The ones that survived in the Navy and they had their families here. In fact, I was invited to their sayonara party. I had talked with Dr. Yoshida, who is in charge of their group. And I asked him if the man was still around who hit the *PENNSYLVANIA*. We took one hit, I just happened to be standing in the wrong place. And he said, "You and Miyoko come to this sayonara party and I'll introduce you to someone who may be able to help you."

So he introduced me to a Mr. Ottawa. And through my personal interpreter, Miyoko, I had a nice conversation with Mr. Ottawa, and he was with the high altitude bombers. I think he said there were five of them when they came back for the second wave and they knew they missed the *PENNSY* on the first go-around, so he said they were looking for us. And they knew they were over us. They found out we were in number one dry dock. And he says that they really couldn't see us because of all the smoke, but they all released at the same time. And he says he doesn't know which one hit us. A very nice gentleman. At that time, he was seventy-six and still flying airplanes.

BC: Really?

EH: He has a flying school in Japan.

BC: So he was -- do you remember what ship he was from?

EH: I don't remember which carrier he was flying from. No. I do know that he was with this formation of five and he was flying one of the airplanes.

BC: He was actually piloting the plane?

EH: Yes.

(Background conversation)

BC: Dan wanted me to ask you again about the different viewpoints that Survivors association members have.

EH: Oh, some of them are still angry after fifty years. But this is one of the problems with people with who stay angry. A great -- one of the places I used to love to vacation was Yugoslavia. Look what anger is doing to those people, you know. Whether it happened fifty years ago or a hundred years ago, or 500 years ago. It's insane. It doesn't solve anything.

BC: Do you think that people coming to the memorial, or when people come to the memorial, that they have that possibility of trying to bridge that gap between people?

EH: I suppose so. Or let's hope they do. That's part of our story, is, you know, what happened and we're not, certainly not showing any animosity toward any of the visitors just because their grandfathers and we had a conflict.

BC: What do you think about -- just personally, what do you think about the -- when I worked at the memorial, you would hear criticisms from both ends. One was that the story wasn't being told accurately because blame was being placed on the Americans or responsibility was being attributed to the Americans when it was all the Japanese fault. What do you think about that?

EH: It's right back to the same old thing. It's politicians playing their games. And if politicians want an end, they're going to find the means. And the people at the bottom of the totem pole, like I was, and like you were in Vietnam, we're the ones that pay for it. But this is part of politics, which is a shame. It shouldn't be part of politics, but it's the way countries are. Can we change it? Let's, you know -- have they changed in the last thousands of years? I don't know. It doesn't look like it.

BC: All right. Thanks a lot.

EH: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW